

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 916

By Marrero B

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of legendary musician and songwriter Alex Chilton.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should honor the memory of a legendary entertainer, artist, and permanent fixture of American music, Alex Chilton; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished musical icon, Alex Chilton was a folk troubadour, blues singer, songwriter, guitarist, master musician, voice of a generation, and godfather of American indie-rock, whose influence has been felt by generations of artist, musicians, and loyal fans; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis, Tennessee, on November 28, 1950, his musical destiny was shaped by the influence of his father, Sidney Chilton, a popular Memphis jazz musician; and

WHEREAS, taking up guitar at age thirteen, he was recognized early on for his soulful voice and distinctive style, and as a teenager in 1966, Alex Chilton was asked to join the Devilles, a popular local Memphis band; and

WHEREAS, building on their tremendous local popularity, the group was renamed the Box Tops and began to perform nationally with sixteen-year-old Alex Chilton as the lead singer; and

WHEREAS, combining elements of soul music and light pop, the Box Tops enjoyed a hit single "The Letter," which reached number one on the charts in the U.S. and abroad in 1967, and was followed by several other major chart toppers, including "Cry Like a Baby" in 1968, and "Soul Deep" in 1969; and

WHEREAS, in early 1970, the members of the Box Tops decided to disband and pursue independent careers, and after moving to New York City, Mr. Chilton worked on perfecting his guitar technique and distinctive singing style, which were heavily influenced by Roger McGuinn of the Byrds; and

WHEREAS, returning to Memphis in 1971, Alex Chilton joined musician Chris Bell in the influential and legendary power-pop group, Big Star; and

WHEREAS, teaming up with acclaimed producer Jim Dickinson and John Fry, owner of Ardent Studios in Memphis, Big Star recorded three of the most pivotal albums in rock history, including *#1 Record* in 1972, *Radio City* in 1974, and the group's masterpiece, *Third/SisterLovers* in 1975, later released in 1978; and

WHEREAS, though never attaining commercial success, Big Star created a seminal body of work that served as a major source of inspiration for succeeding generations of musicians and artists; and

WHEREAS, from alternative groups like R.E.M., the dB's, and the Replacements, to indie groups and singers like Elliot Smith, Cat Power, the Strokes and the Posies, Big Star's impact on subsequent musicians is surpassed only by that of Bob Dylan, the Velvet Underground, and the Beatles; and

WHEREAS, creating a stimulating sound with his high, soulful, bittersweet voice and superb musicianship, Alex Chilton's performances on such Big Star gems as "Thirteen", "September Gurls", "In The Street", "I'm in Love with a Girl", "Back of a Car", and "Nighttime", are considered by many enthusiasts to be the finest work in his stellar career; and

WHEREAS, moving back to New York City in the late 1970s, Alex Chilton ventured into new musical territory; joining the New York CBGB scene with his newly formed band Alex Chilton and the Cossacks, he released the widely praised single "Bangkok", which marked his move from pop studio recording standards toward a looser and more animated punk performance style; and

WHEREAS, a genius at shaping and molding a piece of music, Alex Chilton left New York and once again teamed up with legendary producer Jim Dickinson at Phillips Recording and Ardent Studios in Memphis, and recorded the lo-fi masterpiece, *Like Flies on Sherbert*; and

WHEREAS, back in Memphis, he also began performing with Panther Burns, an experimental roots punk group focused on deconstructing blues, country, and rockabilly music; and

WHEREAS, after moving to New Orleans in the early 1980s, Mr. Chilton took a break from music, working a variety of jobs before taking the stage again for performances; and

WHEREAS, embarking on a new solo career in the mid 1980s, Alex Chilton once again forged a new direction for his work, eschewing effects and blending soul, jazz, country, rockabilly, and pop; and

WHEREAS, during this period, he began using a horn section that consisted of veteran Memphis jazz performers, Fred Ford, Jim Spake, and Nokie Taylor, imbuing the soul-oriented pieces among his repertoire with a postmodern minimalist jazz feel; and

WHEREAS, releasing several noteworthy recordings during this period, including *Feudalist Tarts* in 1985, *No Sex* in 1986, and *High Priest* in 1987, as well as producing several new indie groups, Mr. Chilton gained a reputation for his eclectic taste, his exemplary guitar work, and his mercurial stage presence, adding to the color of his already iconic underground status; and

WHEREAS, spawned by a cult-like following in the indie-college rock scene, a resurgence of interest in Big Star enticed the group to reunite with a reconfigured lineup; and

WHEREAS, teaming up with original member, Jody Stephens, and adding Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow of the Posies, Alex Chilton regularly performed with Big Star throughout the 1990s and 2000s, releasing several new recordings, including *Live* in 1992, *Columbia: Live at Missouri University 4/25/93* in 1993, *Nobody Can Dance* in 1999, *In Space* in 2005, the compilation *Big Star Story* in 2003, and the seminal box set, *Keep an Eye on the Sky* in 2009; and

WHEREAS, while performing with Big Star, he continued his solo career, reunited with the Box Tops on several occasions, and remained an active and viable part of American rock music; and

WHEREAS, appreciating the enduring power of the music he made, Alex Chilton paved his own way throughout his distinguished career, seeking new challenges for his many and varied musical interests, and serving as an inspiration to artists, musicians, and fans alike; and

WHEREAS, a devoted family man, Alex Chilton will be sorely missed by his beloved wife, Laura, his son, Timothy, and a host of family, friends, and devoted fans who will always hold him in the highest regard; and

WHEREAS, as Nighttime closes on the career of music's favorite December boy, Alex Chilton's voice will always be heard in the enduring cosmic choir, and his presence will always be felt in the radiance of the Biggest Star; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chilton, his indelible influence on American music, and his significant contributions to the arts should be commemorated by this General Assembly; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Alex Chilton, reflecting fondly upon his bountiful life, his preeminence as a master musician, and his status as an American musical icon.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend to Mr. Chilton's family and many friends our deepest sympathies and most sincere condolences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.